

HUR OPERATIONS

TRIAL OF

PIR SABGHAT ULLAH SHAH

V

MAJ GEN (RTD) WISAL MOHAMMAD KHAN

Reports emanating from various sources indicated that the Pir was the architect of serious law and order problem in Sind. It was generally said that his intention was to overthrow the Provincial Government and become the ruler of the area. A few police officials went out of their way to malign the Pir. They propagated that the Pir was extremely ambitious, vindictive, greedy, cruel, a debauch and a thoroughly bad hat who had met a great success in misleading the innocent Hurs. The authenticity of these reports was not beyond doubt and I suppose these allegations were probed into by the civil intelligence and finally accepted.

The Pir had a strong hold over a very large number of people in Sind and the Rajputana States therefore I could not understand as to how such a bad person achieved an exalted position. Therefore, for the sake of curiosity I made enquiries in the civil circle. As a result of these investigations I learnt that the Pir was a nice person with strong religious tendencies and wielded great influence in Sind and the Rajputana States. However, he was allergic to foreign rule and was, therefore, all out to put an end to foreign domination. This information fitted in the overall picture and therefore, it appealed to me far more than the vicious propaganda. Later with the emergence of Pakistan in August 1947 the Hur rebellion almost died down. This clearly proves that the Hur aim was to put an end to foreign domination rather than creation of trouble in the area.

The aim of the Government of the day was the maintenance of law and order. The said aim could be achieved by breaking the back bone of the movement and thus rendering them incapable of indulgence in terrorist activities. In accordance with the law of the country the aim

Major General Wisal Mohamad Khan's four earlier articles on "HUR OPERATIONS" in Sind appeared in the four issues of Sind Quarterly 1980.

was to be achieved by the use of minimum force. Hence systematic efforts were made to humiliate the Pir so as to lower him in the esteem of his followers both by fair and foul means, but all in vain. Then various steps were taken to incite the Fakirs and Ghazi Hurs to avenge the disgrace inflicted on the Pir by launching large scale attacks on the troops but the trick failed to pay dividend as the Hurs refused to bite at the bait. Now it dawned on the authorities that they had miscalculated the intelligence of the Hurs and therefore, they started pondering over the problem, as to what step should be taken next. The authorities felt that there were only two courses open to the Government :—

- (a) to win over the Pir and release him after vouching good conduct,
- (b) to try the Pir by a Military court and execute him.

The first course was discarded on the plea that the Pir had created all the trouble in the area during world War II to take advantage of the Government's heavy commitments, in various theatres of war. As he was considered to be very ambitious, Vindictive and greedy, therefore, it was felt that he was likely to retaliate to avenge the injustices done to him and hence there was a great danger of the Pir becoming a terror and a danger at the most critical moment. The administration, thought that the first course was not worth a trial and thus strongly advocated the disposal of the nuisance as the safest course and was therefore, adopted. This clearly shows that the decision was taken prior to the trial and had to be implemented by a Military Court to hood-wink the nation.

During the preparatory phase of the trial the prosecution witnesses were lodged in a barrack and tutored by Samuel Ghani DSP, who was alleged to have had a personal grudge against the Pir. On receipt of the said information I took the law in my own hands and paid an unauthorised surprise visit to the prohibited area and caught the culprit red handed in the performance of the shameful act. Being young and inexperienced I could not imagine anyone stooping so low hence I reported the matter to Brig: Langlands, the Deputy Force Commander. I was horrified to realise that the said report fell on deaf ears.

The events narrated above created considerable confusion in my head and therefore, out of sheer curiosity of attended the proceedings of the Military Court on the first day for a couple of hours. However, I soon get bored with the mock trial and stayed away as the trial was beyond my jurisdiction. The little information I gained during my stay in the court is being reduced to writing as it may be of some interest to people closely connected with the late Pir. A diagram of the court is produced from my memory :—

GENERAL COURT MARTIAL
MEMBERS

4	2	1	3	5
(5 British Officers)				

Defence	Council	Prosecutors			
	W. M. K. (Author) 2 officers of A Branch				
PIR	Curtain	Curtain	Curtain	Witnesses	BOX

CHARGES.

1. Conspiring and preparing to wage a war against the government.
2. Abetment of waging war.

As it was generally believed that the witnesses were likely to turn hostile if they either saw the Pir or heard his voice, therefore adequate measures were taken to ensure that nothing went wrong. During my stay in the court the Pir passed written instructions to the defence council and never spoke to him. The proceedings of the court started in the usual manner and the Pir raised the following objections, through his council:

- (a) Is there not a single Muslim Army Officer in India, to sit as a member of this Court? I expect no justice from an all British court. If the intention is to hang me then do so without a mock trial.
- (b) Why thrust a Hindu advocate on me. Isn't there a single Muslim Advocate in India, for my defence.

The President of the court overruled the objections on the plea that:-

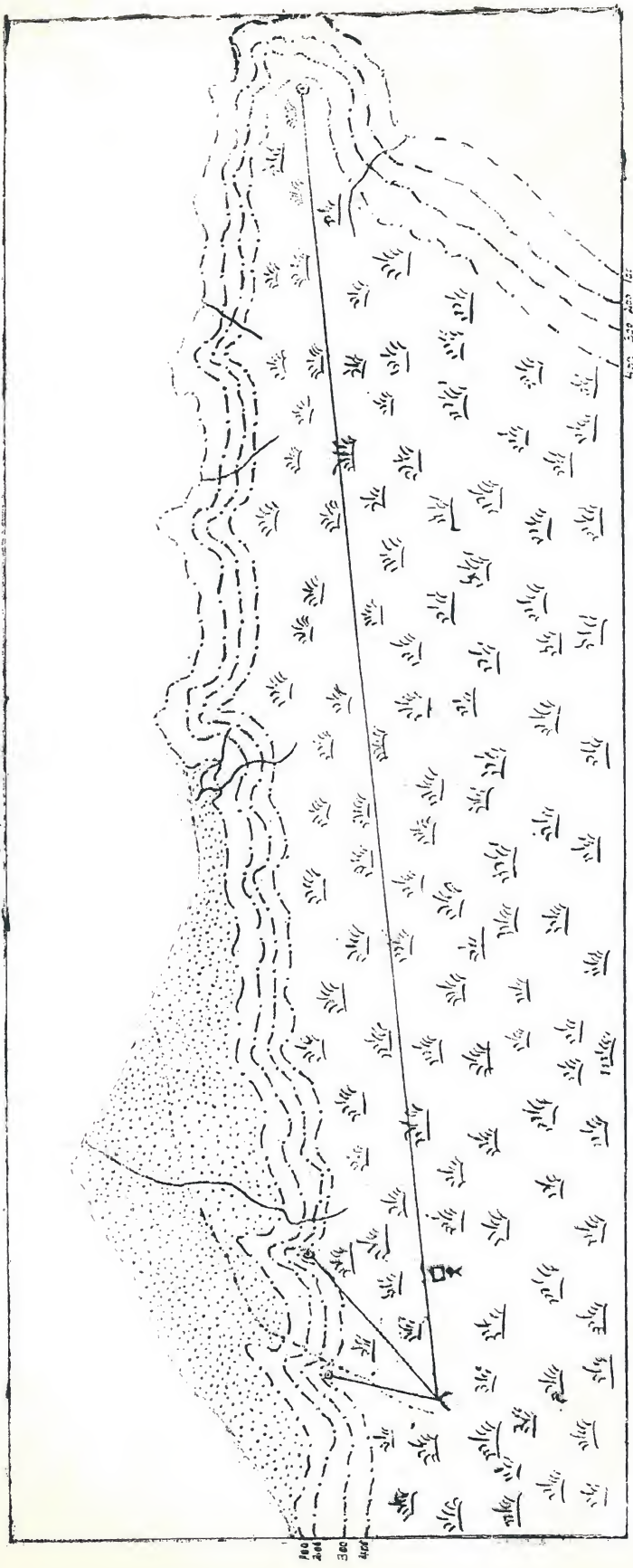
- (a) The members of the court are impartial and would therefore render full justice in the case;
- (b) the best local advocate has been engaged for the defence so as to ensure the best available legal assistance for the accused.

The Pir was cut up with the ruling of the court and stated, through his council, that the obvious intention of the Government is to execute him



After hanging him the dead body of the Pir Saheb was put in a chair and his Murids were called to see it. The Commissioner of Sind Police F. S. Young is in the Picture.

*EYE SKETCH
of the site where the Riv. was known in the Persian Gulf*



SCALE 1 INCH TO 100 YARDS
YARDS 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 YARDS

VISIBILITY GOOD

therefore, the needful should be done without going through the tyranny of a mock trial. The objection was overruled. When questioned by the court whether he pleaded guilty to the charges framed against him or not. The Pir stated that as he was in a jail therefore he was not in a position either to conspire or make preparations for waging a war against the government hence the charges are malignant and fabricated. The President of the court then ordered the Prosecutor to proceed with the case.

At this stage I was some what perplexed as certain questions were intriguing my mind. It was due to this state of my mind that most of the time I concentrated on the observation of the Pir who appeared to me just like a lion in the cage. To state frankly I have come across quite a few Pirs but none of his calibre. He was extremely intelligent with dominating personality and had a good knowledge of the criminal procedure code. To the best of my knowledge throughout the trial he had been issuing written instructions to his defence council. However, as anticipated by him all his efforts to save himself failed to have any effect and the finding of the court was guilty and the sentence death by hanging.

On 20th March 1943, at the age of 34 years, he was executed and buried in an island of the Persian Gulf. Just before his execution the only statement he is alleged to have made is that he was sorry for having committed the sin of indulgence in heavy smoking. The said statement clearly indicates that the Pir considered himself innocent.

The information about the Pir's burial was confined only to those personnel who were required to take point in the operation. The reason for such strict security precautions was due to the fact that the government was of the view that the dead pir could be more dangerous than alive. Knowing the intention of the government I did not dare to probe too much in the sensitive affair which was beyond my jurisdiction. However, I managed to get a copy of the memory sketch of the grave which is attached for the sake of information and interest.

1943 - 34
1922 21

21 13